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ABSTRACT

A national survey of community college department chairpersons was conducted in 1978 to determine: (1) the purposes, procedures, criteria, and standards used to evaluate their administrative performance; (2) their opinions about the present and the desirable components of chairperson appraisal systems; and (3) how chairpersons from various academic disciplines differed in their views of these systems. A sample of 921 chairpersons from 250 institutions that evaluate their chairpersons were selected to participate in the study: 776 responded and 454 met the pre-determined administrative criteria of the study. Data were subjected to a four-part analysis: frequency and percent determinations for survey items; a weighted comparative analysis of the responses concerning the present evaluation systems and desired ones; a stepwise discriminant analysis of response clusters to determine differences among different academic areas; and a content analysis of written evaluation policies. Results showed that although many appraisal systems had included some of the purposes, procedures, criteria, and standards identified as desirable by the chairpersons, several essential components were not being employed. For example, most chairpersons wanted a results-oriented system developed jointly by faculty, administrators, and themselves; however, a rating scale method designed solely by administrators was most common. (JP)

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Performance Appraisal
of
Community College Department/Division
Chairpersons

National Survey of Community College
1978

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PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT/DIVISION CHAIRPERSONS

This study, a national survey of community college department/division chairpersons, had three major purposes: (1) to ascertain the current status, i.e. purpose(s), procedures, criteria, and standards used to evaluate the administrative performance of the chairperson; (2) to determine the opinions of chairpersons about the present and desired components of chairperson appraisal system; and, (3) to determine if chairpersons from varying academic disciplines differed in their views about their present appraisal system and about the elements of a desirable appraisal system.

To accomplish these purposes two surveys were conducted. The first sought to determine a population of community colleges which were evaluating the administrative performance of their chairpersons. Consequently, deans/vice presidents of instruction from 573 public community colleges with enrollments of 500 or more full-time students from 42 states were queried. A total of 471 (82 percent) questionnaires were returned. From the 250 (80 percent) institutions which were evaluating their chairpersons, a sample of 921 chairpersons were selected to participate in the study. The second survey was directed to the chairpersons. From the 921 questionnaires sent, 776 chairpersons (80 percent) responded. Four hundred and fifty-four chairpersons met the criteria; therefore, this study is based on the data from these chairpersons representing 38 states.

A unique feature of this study was the method of data analysis. A coding system was developed which mathematically determined scale weights for each response. This enabled comparison of individual rather than group responses. Other analysis were frequencies, percentages, and stepwise discriminant analysis.

Results showed that although many appraisal systems had included some of the desired purpose(s), procedures, criteria, and standards identified by these chairpersons, several essential components of an effective appraisal system were not being employed.

INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities have grown in size and complexity and have become more expensive to operate. With these additional costs, there has been an increased demand that educational institutions become more accountable and efficient. This requires effective management. A factor crucial to effective management is the development of reliable and valid methods of appraising administrative performance.

The largest group of administrators in the community college are the department and division chairpersons (Lombardi, 1974). Because of their important location as first line administrators, it is no surprise that presidents, such as Priest of Dallas, contend that chairpersons are the key to the ability of any institution to attain its goals and objectives (Priest, 1973). In an earlier article, Richardson (1967) characterized the chairperson as "the key figure in the implementation of the institutional programs". Others (Koehnline and Blocker, 1970; Freleigh, 1973; Lombardi, 1974; and Freimuth, 1975) have suggested that the position is equally critical in other areas such as maintenance and raising of faculty standards, communication between faculty and the administration, and implementation of institutional policies.

The crucial role of the chairperson is due primarily

to the duties and responsibilities which are assigned to them. Although the list of duties and responsibilities varies from as many as 69 to as few as 15 items (Lombardi, 1974; Anthony, 1972; Smith, 1973; and Hammons, 1977) illustrative of such lists is the following: (1) developing class schedules, (2) selecting and requisitioning textbooks and library materials, (3) recruiting and selecting faculty, (4) preparing and administering the departmental budget, (5) developing, improving and reviewing new program proposals, (6) evaluating faculty for promotion, leave and tenure, (7) maintaining departmental records, (8) requisitioning and selecting capital equipment, (9) encouraging and supervising instructional innovations, (10) acting as liason with community services, counseling, registrar, and other departments and divisions within the college, (11) editing catalog materials, (12) preparing annual reports, (13) attending meetings and conferences, (14) preparing teaching schedules, and (15) counseling and advising students on programs (Hammons, 1977). This vast array of functions which the chairperson performs clearly points out the importance of this position.

The recognition of the importance of the chairperson's position is also reflected in the increasing number of inservice training programs and seminars which have been conducted for department/division chairpersons since the middle of the 1960's. These conferences and workshops suggest an increasing acknowledgement that chairpersons

are at least part-time administrators occupying a leadership position.

In view of their considerable influence, institutions need to determine and implement appraisal systems which will insure that chairpersons are maximally effective in their responsibilities. An effective system for appraising the managerial performance of chairpersons can be of practical significance to any community college in the following ways:

1. Reveal the staff development needs of the chairpersons.
2. Clarify the authority, functions, tasks, and responsibilities of chairpersons.
3. Reduce the subjectivity of the appraisal process.
4. Improve the effectiveness of chairpersons in achieving institutional, departmental, and personal goals.
5. Insure that the efforts of chairpersons are directed towards the achievement of institutional goals.
6. Reduce the potential for disruptive litigation resulting from invalid appraisal systems.
7. Allow the administration to more quickly determine which chairpersons are unsuited for the position.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

The purposes of this study were to: (1) to ascertain the currently status i.e. purpose(s), procedures, criteria, and standards used to evaluate the administrative performance of the chairperson; (2) to determine the opinions chairpersons held about the present and desired components of chairperson appraisal systems; and (3) to determine if chairpersons from varying academic disciplines differed in their views about their present appraisal system and about the elements of a desirable appraisal system.

METHOD

The initial step of this study was to select a sample of chairpersons whose administrative performance had been evaluated. This involved identifying (1) the population of community colleges; (2) the community colleges which evaluated the administrative performance of their chairpersons, and (3) the sample of chairpersons to be surveyed.

Selecting A Sample Of Chairpersons

1. Identification of the Population of Community Colleges

Since the institutions evaluating the administrative performance of chairpersons were unknown, all public community colleges with full-time enrollments of 500 or more, as listed in the 1977 Directory of Community, Junior And Technical Colleges, were considered to be the population. Institutions with enrollments less than 500

full-time students were excluded because it was felt that these institutions would either not have chairpersons or would not have formal evaluation systems due to their small size.

Based on the previous stated criteria, 573 (74 percent) institutions from forty-two states were selected.

2. Identification of Community Colleges
Which Evaluated the Administrative
Performance of Chairpersons

All deans/vice presidents of instruction from the 573 colleges were contacted by mail. Each dean/vice president received (1) a letter which explained the nature of the study, (2) a summary report from a previous chairperson study, conducted by the senior author, and (3) a one-page questionnaire which was coded for state, accrediting region, and institution. The questionnaire asked if the institution:

1. evaluated the administrative performance of chairpersons,
2. wished to participate in the study, and
3. had chairpersons meeting the specified criteria.

If the institution elected to participate in the study, the dean/vice president of instruction was requested to supply copies of their written procedures and evaluation forms and to list the names of chairpersons who met the following criteria:

1. Their administrative responsibilities included at least three of the following:
 - a. participated in the recruitment and selection of the staff,
 - b. prepared and administered the department(s) division budget(s),
 - c. coordinated the function of one or more departments,
 - d. supervised and evaluated faculty members, and
 - e. served as the primary communication link between the faculty and administration.
2. Their unit (department or division) consisted of at least three full-time faculty members.
3. They were full-time employees.
4. The position was not routinely rotated.
5. They had held the position long enough to have been appraised at least once.

A total of 313 (66 percent) institutions from forty states indicated that they evaluated the administrative performance of chairpersons. Of these institutions, 250 (80 percent) expressed a willingness to participate in the study.

3. Selection of the Sample
Of Chairpersons

From the 250 participating institutions, 921 chairpersons were selected to receive questionnaires. Each chairperson was grouped into one of nine discipline groups:

- a. Administrative Sciences (i.e. business, accounting, management, secretarial science, etc.)
- b. Social Sciences (i.e. psychology, sociology, history, political science, etc.)
- c. Humanities (i.e. English, speech, art, music, etc.)
- d. Science, Mathematics, and Engineering
- e. Technology (i.e. automotive, cosmetology, waste water, etc.)
- f. Health and Physical Education
- g. Nursing and Allied Health (i.e. nursing, dental hygiene, medical assisting, radiologic technology, etc.)
- h. developmental education
- i. other (i.e. chairpersons whose duties and responsibilities encompassed more than one discipline).

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A cover letter, an eleven-page, three-part coded questionnaire, and a stamped return envelope were sent to each chairperson selected. Each questionnaire was coded for: (1) state, (2) accrediting region, (3) institution number (taken from the 1977 Directory of Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges), and (4) discipline of the chairperson.

In order to assure that each chairperson met the criteria established for this study, each was asked to verify that he/she met the specified criteria. The chairpersons who did not meet the criteria were instructed to return the questionnaire unanswered.

Seven hundred and seventy-six chairpersons (80 percent) returned the questionnaire; however, only 454 met both the established criteria and completed all sections of the questionnaire on the analysis of these 454 questionnaires.

Development And Administration Of The
Data Gathering Instrument

While the sample of chairpersons was being selected, the survey instrument was developed. Due to the lack of significant literature relating to chairperson evaluations in community colleges or higher education, the questionnaire was developed primarily from information obtained through reviewing the literature on performance appraisal in business and industry, from the authors' experiences as deans responsible for evaluating chairpersons, faculty and other professionals, and a pilot test involving a total of thirty-seven community college faculty, chairpersons, and administrators.

The survey instrument was divided into three sections: (1) description of present system, (2) opinions and feelings about the present evaluation system, and (3) components of an ideal evaluation system. Section I (present system) and section III (ideal system) had identical questions to facilitate the comparative analysis of the present and desirable evaluation systems. All sections of the questionnaire focused on four major areas of questioning. They were: (1) purpose(s), (2) procedures, (3) criteria, and (4) standards.

Data Analysis

A SPSS program was used to obtain frequencies and percents for each question on the instrument. In addition, since one of the purposes of this study was to determine the opinions of chairpersons about their current appraisal system, the answers to questions in section I (present system) and section III (desired system) were compared using the following code:

-1 Chairperson answered "yes" to the question in part I but answered "no" to the same question in part III;

+1 Chairperson answered "no" to the question in part I but answered "yes" to the same question in part III;

0 Chairperson answered "yes" or "no" to the question in part I and answered in the same manner to the question in part III;

The frequency of -1, +1, or 0 responses was determined for each question. A -1 code was interpreted to mean the chairperson's present system had a component which was not desirable in an "ideal" appraisal system. A +1 code was interpreted to mean the chairperson's present system was lacking a desirable component. A 0 code meant that the chairperson's present system of evaluation was compatible with his/her idea of an "ideal" appraisal system. Thus, in comparison with most survey results which report only differences in group responses to questions, this procedure permitted a comparison of individual responses to the questions in part I and III.

The biomedical program (BMDP7M), stepwise discriminant analysis was used to determine if chairpersons from different academic disciplines differed in their opinions about their present and desired evaluation systems. To obtain the desired results the categorical data (yes-no) were transformed using two different methods. The first method assigned a +1, -1, or 0 weight to the responses given by each chairperson to the questions in sections I and III. This coding system was the same as that described previously. The second method classified all data into one of five categories and then mathematically assigned scale weights to each response to each variable.

Through stepwise discriminant analysis each method of coding responses clustered chairpersons around variables found to be most powerful in separating the mean group differences.

The last type of analysis was a content analysis of the written policies, procedures, and appraisal forms sent by the deans/vice presidents of instruction. The primary purpose of this analysis was to compare the findings from the survey with actual evaluation procedures used in the colleges.

RESULTS

Percentage Appraising

From the 573 colleges initially surveyed, 472 (82 percent) responded. Three hundred and thirteen (6.5 percent) were evaluating; one hundred and twenty-five (26.5 percent) were not evaluating; and thirty three (7.0 percent) did not answer the question. Therefore, it would appear that approximately two-thirds of the colleges are appraising the administrative performance of chairpersons.

Present and Desired Components of Chairperson Evaluation Systems

With few exceptions the most common appraisal approach was a rating scale method which had been developed by the administration with little or no participation by faculty and chairpersons. However, the majority of chairpersons wanted a results-oriented system which would be mutually developed by faculty, administrators, and themselves. Such a system would require setting goals and objectives and the criterion, achievement of objectives, would be one of the criteria used to assess performance, a desire consistent with the recommendations in the literature of business and industry.

Once the evaluation system had been developed, only a few institutions had reviewed their system, although there was almost unanimous agreement among chairpersons that the system should be reviewed periodically. The fact that most chairpersons felt the present purpose(s) procedures, criteria, and standards in their appraisal systems were either in need of some revision or were inappropriate would support an established review process.

Regardless of who was involved in the development of the system, chairpersons were appraised annually and felt this was desirable. Only new employees were evaluated with greater frequency. This desire for annual evaluations was contrary to the recommendations of writers on the topic of performance appraisal, who suggested that evaluations be conducted on a continual basis or, minimally, twice a year.

Although the primary responsibility for conducting annual evaluations had been given to the chairperson's supervisor, only a few supervisors had been given training in appraisal techniques. Chairpersons were virtually in unanimous agreement that supervisors should be given special training, an ingredient considered essential to the success of any appraisal system by the writers on the topic.

The survey revealed that approximately half of the chairpersons felt their evaluation system did not require adequate documentation to make a valid assess-

ment of their performance, a necessary prerequisite to any meaningful evaluation.

The steps involved in the collection of relevant information, the writing of the appraisal report, and the conduction of the appraisal interview were generally prescribed by a set of written procedures. Although chairperson responses would indicate that most of the procedures they found desirable were currently being used, a review of the materials sent by the deans/vice presidents of instruction indicated only 14 of the 27 procedures desired by virtually all chairpersons were found in any one system.

Examples of some of the procedures desired by over 90 percent of the chairperson but employed infrequently were: (1) giving progress reports to chairpersons on their performance during the evaluation period, (2) requiring an outline of specific activities which the chairperson must do to overcome assessed weaknesses, (3) specifying a time period for correcting performance, (4) discussing the appraisal prior to writing the final report, or (5) outlining the appeal process. In addition, the desire of chairpersons to have a results-oriented appraisal system which required setting goals and objectives also caused chairpersons to want procedures which allowed modification of the previously agreed upon goals and objectives. They also wanted a review of their progress toward the established goals and objectives before their annual performance appraisal.

By requesting procedures calling for the setting of goals and objectives, chairpersons indicated their support of the evaluation criterion, achievement of objectives, a request supported by the literature on performance appraisal. At present, this criterion ranks behind personal traits, management skills, and job performance.

If goals and objectives were required then the desire of chairpersons to have more objective standards would be accomplished. However, surprisingly chairpersons did not want evaluations based solely on objective standards, but wished to continue present use of both objective and subjective standards.

These conclusions indicate that present systems for appraising chairpersons, although containing several desirable components, are in need of revision and subsequent changes in appraisal procedures, criteria, and standards. The need for such changes was generally supported by chairpersons from different academic disciplines as the following section indicates.

Differences Among Chairpersons From Different Disciplines

The stepwise discriminant analysis of chairperson responses from nine academic discipline groups and the calculation of frequency of "yes" responses from each group to each question enabled several general conclusions to be drawn.

As stated under the "findings" section, chairpersons had been initially categorized into nine academic discipline groups. They were: (1) administrative sciences, (2) social sciences, (3) humanities, (4) science, mathematics, and engineering, (5) technology, (6) developmental education, (7) other, (8) health and physical education, and (9) allied health and nursing.

Data analysis revealed that chairpersons, regardless of discipline, were in general agreement that the purpose(s) of their evaluation should be primarily developmental or developmental and judgmental. However, significant differences existed among chairpersons about certain procedures, criteria, standards, and other components. Although the specific items which differentiated the groups into five clusters varied, some general conclusions seemed warranted:

1. Chairpersons from certain discipline groups felt differently about such procedures as:
 - a. assignment of responsibilities,
 - b. uniformity of procedures,
 - c. notification of results by a specified date,
 - d. written evaluation reports,
 - e. assessments which are judgmental,
 - f. review of evaluation results by supervisor's, and
 - g. training of supervisor.

All chairpersons desired these procedures, but some groups showed less variability in their answers to these questions.

2. Differences existed among chairpersons of different disciplines about the criteria used to evaluate their performance. Although most chairpersons desired an appraisal system which used the criterion, achievement of objectives, some groups of chairpersons had a significantly greater desire to have this criterion included.

3. Although all groups preferred standards which were both objective and subjective, there was a wide range of opinions among discipline groups on this.

4. Differences were found among discipline groups regarding who should participate in the evaluation. Some groups supported a committee, while others favored greater faculty involvement.

5. Some disciplines felt stronger about the need for written purpose(s) and written standards than others.

Although indepth studies of group differences need to be conducted, the knowledge of the existence of group differences can provide useful information when selecting the members of the evaluation or review committee. Input from these groups may help increase the overall acceptance of the appraisal system and perhaps improve chairpersons' motivations to improve their performance.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of the data gathered in this study and the review of the literature on performance appraisal, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Although the research conducted and articles published on performance appraisal in business and industry are voluminous, there is a virtual famine of research or published articles on this topic in the higher education sector.
2. Current practices, problems, and issues in evaluating chairpersons do not differ greatly from the practices, problems, and issues in business and industry.
3. There is a high degree of consensus among chairpersons about the desirable elements of an appraisal system.
4. Since the chairperson occupies an important and influential position in the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the college, all colleges should evaluate the administrative performance of their chairpersons annually.

5. Colleges which are developing or reviewing their chairperson appraisal system should seek input from faculty, chairpersons, and administrators, and should include in their system those elements considered desirable by the chairpersons in this study.

6. In view of the differences found among chairpersons from different academic disciplines, colleges should be sensitive to differences among chairpersons and attempt to accomodate individual differences into their evaluation system.

7. Supervisors should be given specific training in performance appraisal techniques.

8. Periodically, reviews of any appraisal system should be conducted to insure its continued effectiveness.

9. Chairperson appraisal systems should incorporate more of a results-oriented, achievement of objectives focus.

10. To assure a common understanding of the appraisal system, the purpose(s), procedures, criteria, and standards should be in writing.

11. To increase the acceptance of a chairperson appraisal system and to insure that it can be implemented as designed, input from faculty, chairpersons, and the administration should be incorporated prior to final adoption of any evaluation system.

12. Stepwise discriminant analysis should be used

in similar studies as a method of analyzing group differences. This method enables the researcher to both explain the complex relationships among groups and to eliminate variables which are redundant.

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